

This record is a partial extract of the original cable. The full text of the original cable is not available.

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 DJIBOUTI 001158

SIPDIS

STATE FOR AF AND AF/E;
LONDON, PARIS FOR AFRICA WATCHER;

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [PINS](#) [KDEM](#) [DJ](#)

SUBJECT: REGIONAL ELECTIONS ANNOUNCED

1. (U) SUMMARY: On December 30th, 2005, elections will be held in Djibouti for the first time to choose regional governing councils for the five districts of Arta, Ali Sabieh, Dikhil, Obock, Tadjourah and the three community councils of Djibouti City. The election date was postponed for more than two years despite promises from the President. All clues seem to indicate that this one will be the final date. On November 12th, the Minister of Interior issued a press statement in which he indicated the number of registered voters for this election, and modalities as well as conditions in order for candidates to compete. For the first time in Djibouti, independent and civil society candidates are allowed to run for an elected office. As with the presidential elections, the opposition has decided to boycott the upcoming regional elections, once again demanding electoral reform. END SUMMARY.

2. (U) The government proclaimed December 30, 2005 to be Election Day in the five regions of the country as well as Djibouti City. The number of registered voters determines the number of seats in regional and community councils. One seat is given for every 1,000 registered voters in a region or community. The regional governing council in Dikhil will have 30 seats, Tadjourah will have 22 seats, Ali Sabieh will have 20 seats, Obock will have 16 seats, and Arta will have 9 seats. For the purposes of decentralization, a special status was created for the City of Djibouti to dictate how the city would be governed. The special status divides the City of Djibouti into three communities - Ras Dika, Boulaos, and Hayabley - each with its own Community Governing Council. The same proportion will be used to determine the number of seats per governing council: 1 seat per 1,000 registered voters in the community. The Community Council for Ras Dika will have 4 seats, Boulaos will have 71 seats, and Hayabley will have 29 seats.

3. (U) Once elected, the three Community Councils (CC) will choose 35 representatives among themselves to form the Council of Djibouti City (CDC). The CDC will then elect the Mayor of Djibouti City from within its membership. Community councils are responsible for managing social, cultural and sports facilities within the community. CC also manages public markets, works and communal spaces. The local CC is consulted in all matters related to taxes, voting, and investment choices. The CDC is responsible for all programs and development projects concerning Djibouti-City. Environmental protection, acceptance or refusal of legacies and donations, local taxes collection are among the major responsibilities of the CDC.

4. (U) In order to be a candidate in the regional and community elections, a person must be 23 years of age or older on the day of the election and be a Djiboutian citizen. Candidacy is open to political parties and independent persons from civil society. Each party or civil society organization can submit a list of candidates to fill the number of seats in the regional or community council to which they wish to be elected. Each candidate or list must pay a 250,000 DF deposit to the National Treasury, which will be returned if they receive more than five percent of the vote. The candidate or party that receives 25 percent or more of the vote

will get 50 percent of the seats for that council. If multiple parties or candidates receive 25 percent or more of the vote, then a second round of voting will take place. The remaining 50 percent of the seats will be proportionally distributed to the other candidates that received higher than 5 percent of the vote.

15. (U) Due to their positions, some civil servants are not eligible to compete for regional elections. This includes accountants of public funds, district commissars, Constitutional Council members and judges, security forces and army personnel, state inspectors, civil servants working in the department of Decentralization within the Ministry of Interior, ministers and members of parliament, and Secretary Generals and directors of public-owned companies. Registration for candidates will close November 26, 2005. The Minister of Interior has left open the option of a second round of voting for January 20, 2006, should any seat have been contested. On numeric level, registered voters in the whole republic total 204,607. There will be 204 seats contested. There will be 293 (two hundred ninety three) polling stations.

16. (U) Some critics are already appearing within civil society organizations and national observers regarding the perceived lack of preparation from the government. Questions such as "How will the regional, community and city councils be paid?" have yet to be answered. Others complain about the disproportion between the different electoral communities in terms of inhabitants and number of seats. For example, the Community of Ras-Dika has only four seats to represent 3,906 registered voters, while the Community of Boulaos has 71 seats to represent 71,406 registered voters. Also, power sharing between the central government and the local governing bodies has not yet been well defined. The decentralization law of 2002 and the special status of the capital do not clearly divide areas of responsibility between the two entities.

17. (U) Some government officials are aware of the malfunctions and errors cited in the different laws but they attribute this to the election being the first experience in decentralization. On the other hand, the several promises made so far by President Guelleh would not allow a third postponement of the elections. International donors present in Djibouti have expressed their frustration when decentralization is mentioned in a discussion. Although the lack of resources is obvious and despite the several reminders from donors that the Government express its needs well ahead of the due date, the government persists on presenting its demands in a very short notice. This attitude has jeopardized a number of projects in the past, particularly with the EU regarding 600,000 Euros devoted for pre-election operations that ended up being returned to the EU because the Djiboutian government didn't ask for assistance in timely manner. Post has learned that the 2006 state budget has allocated 1 Billion Djibouti Francs (USD 5.6 Million) for decentralization. The uses of this budget will be discussed in the Parliament when the Budgetary Session opens on November 30, 2005.

RAGSDALE